

It is impossible to calculate the terrific price we as a nation are paying because of poor mental health. That is why a vast, continuing program to promote better mental health for Canadians is being carried out by federal, provincial and municipal authorities and voluntary agencies like The Canadian Mental Health Association.



Who Can Help You?

If one's mental health does become poor, there are qualified people ready to help. Mental illness of the more serious kind seldom strikes without warning; the symptoms have been present for some time. Like other sicknesses, mental illness is more easily cured in its earliest stages and gets worse when neglected.

Just as you naturally turn to your family doctor for "physical" ills you should also see him when you feel your mental or emotional health is suffering. He will advise you and, if he feels it necessary, tell you where to get more help. Many communities are supplying special services for this purpose. Their aim is prevention of serious mental illness.

The mental health clinic treats mild and early mental health problems, usually referred to it by general practitioners, teachers, social workers, clergymen, public health nurses and parents. Here you'll find a team of sympathetic and understanding experts who are specialists in mental illness, including a psychiatrist, psychologist and social worker. If it is for children only, it will be called a *child guidance clinic*. Some provinces have *traveling*

clinics to bring this service to smaller towns, villages and outlying areas.

Many general hospitals are now equipped with an *outpatient psychiatric clinic* for the prevention and treatment of mental and nervous disorders and some supply *in-patient psychiatric ward* care to persons not ill enough to need mental hospital treatment.

Mental hospitals in every province treat the mentally ill. We have come a long way from the "bad old days" of such institutions and our modern hospitals have a very fine treatment record. Here, again, a lot depends on how soon the individual goes to them for help. In addition to the other specialists, these hospitals employ occupational and recreational therapists whose special skills hasten the patient's recovery to a useful, normal life.



Remember . . .

You can do a lot for your own mental health and in helping your children grow to emotional maturity. If illness should occur, there are trained experts with modern scientific knowledge and facilities to treat and cure you. Like any other kind of sickness, mental illness has its best chance of cure when it is attended to early and not neglected.

Additional copies of this and other mental health pamphlets are distributed, without charge, by your provincial and/or local Department of Health.

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Mental Health

What Is Mental Health?

Mental health is so closely linked with how we think, feel and do that it would be unwise, if not impossible, to tie it down to a simple definition. There is, however, one quality common to people who enjoy good mental health—emotional security.

Such persons are useful members of society, reasonably happy and well-adjusted, who get along with their families, friends, schoolmates and business associates. They have their share of the "blues", get into quarrels and once in a while lose their tempers, but they have learned to take the ups and downs, the troubles and annoyances of everyday living *with a minimum of damage to themselves and others*. As you'd expect, these people are able to meet life's serious crises successfully.

Fortunately, mental health isn't a case of "either you have it or haven't." Just as physical health can be improved, or become run down, so too with mental health; that is the encouraging thing about it and the one which seems to be the most misunderstood. A weak or sickly individual can build better physical health and similarly most of us can do something about strengthening our own and our children's mental health.

A Way of Life

Mental health isn't something that is separate from the rest of us, to be strengthened with a "set of exercises" or a "course of treatment". It's interlocked with our physical health, social life, church affiliation, family relationship, work and play and community participation.

In short, good mental health is something we have or can develop from *balanced living*.

Overwork, not enough recreation, selfish living... these won't necessarily make us mentally ill but they can lower our mental health. Regular, adequate meals, eight hours of sleep, fresh air and exercise is time-tried advice for general health. It applies to mental health, too! Family life, the church and social activities should play their important roles, each in reasonable proportion.

In this way we can keep emotional equilibrium... respect for ourselves and others, self-control, tolerance of the other person's views, ability to give as well as to take, making decisions and accepting responsibilities, facing up to problems and meeting success and failure with equally good grace... the list could be expanded but it adds up to the same thing, the ability to "get along."



Especially For Our Children

Good mental health has been described as a family matter, flourishing in happy home life. How a child is brought up, the kind of family spirit about him—this is what mainly decides the kind of adult he will become.

The things that are so vital to sound mental health in children are basically simple... love and affection, praise and encouragement, a feeling of security in the home, a chance to really grow without being smothered by too much love and too many "don'ts".

Wise parents today realize more and more that children need a healthy emotional background just as much as good food and clothing and education.

Why A Mental Health Program?

If mental illness could be measured by the numbers in our mental hospitals, that alone would make it our greatest public health concern. The tragic truth is that this is only a part of the total picture. "Problem" children, discontented workers in factory and office, unhappy homes, lonely and frustrated individuals, moody and irritable personalities, fears we can't explain and ailments without physical basis that plague our existence—all these and many more are only too frequently signs of weaknesses in mental health.

